

MRS Meeting
Western Counties
Simpson Auditorium, AB Tech Asheville
December 10, 2004

Attendees:

State Staff: Tony Troop, Sybil Wheeler, Dawn Warren, Keith Davis, Joy Gossett, John McMann, Heather Thomas, Dan Comer (AFI), Billy (FGC).

Counties: Ashe, Catawba, Clay, Davidson, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Transylvania, Union.

Agenda:

Introduction

Division Updates (Dear County & Admin Letters)

Policy Issues

Future Meetings the need to meet everyone's needs/non MRS counties

Issues Identified for discussion (Memorandum of Agreement how to you do them, what do you call workers now (not investigators), who are you using as facilitators, who is providing services for Services Recommended what code is used?)

Division Updates – Letters/ Policy Updates

- Letters have come out regarding: staffing, Work First check insert, training calendar, family foster homes, new adoption form, Work First manual change, 12/1 manual change.
- Policy to come out soon 1205 foster care funding and new meth (and drug affected children) policy to go to Children's Services Committee this week.
- Domestic Violence training Trainers have been interviewed
- Structured Decision Making being piloted to counties, going to Children's Services next month
- Day Care Policy being changed
- Rewriting Chapter 8 Dear County Director and Administrative Letters will be folded in.

Policy Issues

- Guardian ad litem Tony attended one of their meetings
 - They say they are not being invited to the Child and Family Team Meetings that are taking the place of the PPAT meetings.
 - They would like to be invited to all CFT meetings, but they **must** be invited if the meeting is taking the place of PPAT.
 - Some of the GAL's reported that county staff told them that with MRS there would eventually be no more kids coming into custody and no need for GAL's this is completely untrue
 - Note that the entry rate into foster care has not decreased in any state doing MRS, only the re-entry rate and length of stay has decreased.

- Comment from the group that now that CFT meetings are arranged around the families' schedules, not the professionals involved, it may be more difficult for GALs to attend.
- Child on Child Sexual Contact
 - Policy says this can be taken as neglect/lack of supervision, so it can be a Family Assessment.
 - However, use caution/want to ensure that you do not interview the child in a group with someone who sexually abused them. (Even if the allegation is child A on child B, child A may have learned it from someone in the house.)
- Intake Screening and Assignment
 - Social workers have come to training sessions and reported that cases are being taken as Family Assessment that involve broken bones or sex abuse
 - Need to stress that if it is an abuse allegation, it **cannot** be assigned Family Assessment
 - Need to practice good intake (not all broken bones are abuse) and then assign correctly.

Items of other discussion

- Assigning Immediate Response cases as Family Assessment – how do you do this?
 - Tony has not heard of this being a problem – take advantage of the situation and own it.
- Domestic Violence as Family Assessment
 - Small number of original 10 take all DV as Forensic, but most decide on a case by case basis.
 - Look for patterns, history, use of weapons when deciding how to assign.
 - Also consider, do not substantiate on the victim if she did her best to protect this child. You may substantiate on her, but be sure to document specifically why (don't want to inadvertently hurt her chances of custody if she leaves abuser.)
- Minnesota Alternative Track Evaluation has been released. Is on the web. Major findings include:
 - 1) Child safety is not compromised, in fact it was improved.
 - 2) Families who received the alternative track were less likely to have repeat maltreatment.
 - 3) Initial cost and worker time greater, but in the long term it was more cost effective.
 - 4) Families responded positively and felt they were treated better and that social services improved their lives.
 - 5) Most CPS workers liked it better, particularly as they gained experience.
 - Missouri's program executive summary also available on the web – their findings were similar.
 - We (NC) anticipate similar findings. Duke will be conducting the evaluation this year.

Family Centered Meeting Practice Guidelines

- Document done with NC State Family Group Conferencing not policy but a resource guide, gives best practice.
- Helps your meeting be the best Family Centered meeting it can be, regardless of the specific model.
- Like to simplify family centered meetings, will likely be some policy about it
Division will try to consolidate the meeting part of the manual.

Plans for MRS Statewide

- Have submitted a proposal to DHHS will involve General Assembly changing all CPS laws (from investigate to assess) but that will open up all these laws to scrutiny.
 - Division may ask some MRS counties to talk to General Assembly.
- Training want to meet all the needs of the 52 by 6/30/05. In order to do this we will provide more training.
 - The 52 will be priority until 7/1/05 when the remaining 48 will be given priority.
 - Will start a program to mentor and coach facilitators.
 - Start web-based training.
- Evaluation Duke conducting in depth evaluation, record reviews etc.
 - DIRM on-line evaluation rolling out in Spring 05.
- Child and Family Services Reviews counties will be scored on traditional child welfare policy, not MRS policy. If they see a discrepancy between MRS policy and practice they will consult with the county on it, but will not be dinged .
 - If the CFS review team feels that a county made the wrong finding (Ex: County found Services not needed , Review Team felt it should have been Services Needed) they have to be able to cite what safety issue was the problem.
- *Must begin assigning cases Family Assessment*
 - The Division cannot go to the General Assembly and ask for more money for MRS if all 52 of the current MRS counties are not doing Family Assessment. So the message from the Division is that all counties need to start assigning cases Family Assessment now. If there are specific difficulties, Tony will make a site visit for assistance.

MRS Conference/Newsletter

- Have reviewed approval for a statewide MRS conference. Will be held prior to 6/30/05.
- Tony will be talking to John later today about a newsletter including information with Practice Notes and Training Matters

County Updates - Facilitators

- Western 7 counties have contracted with Mountain Mediation Services to use them as a facilitator.
- Haywood is using a former employee do facilitate and using IVE Waiver \$ to pay for it

- Ashe approved a position but struggling with the bureaucratic issues of getting the position through personnel. They have a neutral site for CFT meetings.
- Catawba using social workers.
- Transylvania is using social workers right now, but they don't want to do it that way permanently. Working on identifying people to attend training.
- Henderson contracts with dispute settlement
- IVE Waiver has allowed counties pay for facilitators.

Child and Family Team meetings

- Issues if it is convenient for families it is hard for professionals, social workers can work flex time, but we can't require that of the other professionals involved.
- Work First need to be sure to include cash, not just employment services.

Future Meetings

- Discussion around having meetings by experience, or by size, also about how best to include non-MRS counties. Discussed the idea from the Eastern counties, group agreed.
 - Will have 3 meetings, East, West, and Central, but any county can come to any of them (will no longer meet as the 10 vs the 42).
 - The morning will be general business, and after lunch the meeting will be divided by whatever issue is being discussed at this meeting.
 - The non-MRS counties will be invited, but due to space limitations will ask them to limit attendance to 2 people per county.
 - They will be asked to hold their questions and they will be addressed at the last hour of the breakout.
- If anyone has any ideas about the next 52 meeting, let Tony know.
- Meetings will go back to the 10-3 time frame.
- Because of the need for breakout space, this facility will no longer meet our needs. After we can locate appropriate space, Tony will send message out about meeting dates.